The World of Letters As Others See It

All the Difference in the World.

WHEN "Trilby" appeared years ago, many of us, then youngsters, were protected (in vain) from the lovely story because Trilby had been somebody's mistress before the romance began. So to an earlier generation "The Scarlet Letter" had seemed dangerous because Hester Prynne's child was illegitimate. But neither book had physical passion for its theme, though the force of sex in life, for good or evil, gave each story most of its interest and its pathos. How indecent in the artistic sense, how indecorous, either book might have been, we realize by supposing that Du Maurier had centred attention on Trilby's early and sordid affairs, before she met her true love, or that Hawthorne had given us in detail the experiences of Hester in Arthur Dimmesdale's arms.—*From "Decency in Literature." By John Erskine in the North American Review.*

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George Gissing and the World.

A NOVELIST may love the world like Dickens, scorn it like Stendhal, denounce it like Tolstoy; he may vex himself almost to death with its stupidity and its vulgarity, like Flaubert; he may enjoy it as an endless dictionary of facts, like Balzac; he may think what he will of the world and take it as he pleases—only he cannot refuse it. Gissing's talent might perfectly well have thrived upon hatred of the world, nourishing the grievance of its ugliness and brutality; and he would have done no harm to his gift, though his exasperation had been ten times what it was. But Gissing perhaps had been wounded beyond his strength; he had not the build of a man who can fight the world and be stimulated by the fight, and anyhow life assaulted him too soon, with horrible unfairness, before the burliest of champions could have been ready to meet it.—*From the London Times.*

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Little Portraits—
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE is a large man. Somehow one feels that the author of "Rodney Stone" and "Brigadier Gerard" ought to be a large man with well braced muscles and a wholesome physique. There is something almost indecent in the idea of the puny weakling earning fame and fortune with adventure stories. Conan Doyle used to be no mean cricketer, and his personality is an assurance that in good times and ill he may be safely relied on to play the game. In Sherlock Holmes he has created a character more familiar to the wayfaring man than Sam Weller or Falstaff. But I like to think of him as the author of "Through the Magic Door," the least mannered, most enthusiastic and perhaps most helpful book about books that the genuine book lover ever wrote. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh sixty-three years ago. He practiced as a doctor at Southsea. He has traveled in the Arctic and in West Africa. His first book was published in 1887. He has had parliamentary ambitions, and nowadays he believes in fairies and in spirits.—*From John o' London's Weekly.*

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Little Portraits—W. J. Locke.

NOWADAYS W. J. Locke is very white and dignified and gentle. I knew him years before he was white, but he was always dignified and always gentle. There is an ancient and stubborn superstition that women adore strong, masculine and rather brutal men. One of the most popular of contemporary novelists always makes her heroes thrash her heroines with a whip. And they love them for it. But this is a novelist's illusion. Max Beerbohm once drew a caricature of W. J. Locke in an attitude of gentle cooing friendliness with a cup of tea in his hand, surrounded by a group of admiring ladies of the Lyceum Club. The teacup has its victories as well as the whip. Locke was once a schoolmaster. Then he became secretary to the Royal Institute of British Architects, a position which he retained long after his position as a novelist was established. His first novel was published twenty-seven years ago.—*From John o' London's Weekly.*

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Little Portraits—Edgar Wallace.

EDGAR WALLACE is growing white in these days, but he remains what he has been for all the twenty years and more that I have known him—a simple hearted, straightforward, entirely lovable man. Wallace is certainly one of the best looking of living writers, but that does not bother him in the least. He is a man of moderate height and unqualified kindliness. In the nineties he served for six years as a private soldier. He fought in the South African war, in the course of which he went from the ranks to become a war correspondent. Before that he had begun his literary career as a poet. Edgar Wallace is a prolific and most industrious writer, and his short stories are conspicuous for the remarkable ingenuity of their plots and for the sense of drama with which they are told. When Edgar Wallace is not writing stories he is to be found on a race course, and he is one of the very few men of whom it may be truly said that racing costs him nothing. —*From John o' London's Weekly.*

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Little Portraits—"Sapper."

MAJOR McNEILE, now known to literary fame as "Sapper," is tall and lean, with that characteristic leanness of the British professional classes for which Mr. George Moore once professed unbounded admiration. His face is thin, his hair is smooth, and he wears the scrubby little mustache which (for some mysterious reason) soldiers love. He is young and looks still younger. He is cheerful, eager, and he makes no secret of the fact that he hugely enjoys his success. He is a Belfast man without the suggestion of conceit. He was serving in the Engineers when war broke out. When Kitchener's Army was formed he was transferred to the infantry, and before the armistice he commanded a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. War bored "Sapper," and in order to escape the boredom of war he began to write the stories collected in the volume called "Sergeant Michael Cassidy." "Bulldog Drummond" made "Sapper" famous, and there is something of the creation in the creator.—*From John o' London's Weekly.*

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Little Portraits—E. Phillips Oppenheim.

"SAPPER," as I have said, is a lean man. Oppenheim is the antithesis of a lean man. Did I not fear to speak evil of dignitaries I should say that he was fat. Both men are successful story writers, and both are exuberantly and justifiably cheerful. Short, round faced and chubby, Oppenheim is one of the cheeriest companions imaginable and one of the most desirable men in London with whom to spend an afternoon when the luck is out and life is hard to understand and to endure. There is not the smallest suggestion of "side" about Oppenheim and not the smallest affectation. He works hard and methodically, and perhaps more than any other English novelist he has discovered (and exploited) the financial possibilities of the cinema. He prefers to live in the country and is fond of most country pursuits. But he is often to be found in London, and he regards bridge as a tolerable substitute for golf—particularly on a wet afternoon.—*From John o' London's Weekly.*

Football

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morsels rather more at length, perhaps, than the average reader will remember them.

"A team is well equipped if it has in its repertoire about twenty-five plays, apportioned as follows: Sixteen rushes, consisting of ten plunges, slants and sweeps, three reverse plays, and three tricks; seven forward passes; two kicks. Some teams have as many as forty plays, but far better is it to have a few plays well learned, for it is the execution rather than the nature of the play which makes it successful."

"The greatest failing of the average spectator is that he keeps his eyes glued on the ball, or the runner, during the progress of a play, "missing" entirely the eternal conflict between the offensive interferer and the defensive tackler."

"One frequently sees a brilliant run by a noted halfback, but he who attributes a good gain entirely to the runner not only does injustice to his team mates, but also misses one of the really fine points of football."

"Throughout the vicissitudes of the rushing game, caused by the everchanging rules, the art of kicking has always remained the backbone of the offense."

"There has always been mystery as to why the tackle is so frequently attacked. . . . It so happens that plays run from standard formations against tackle utilize the backfield to best advantage as interferers. In the case of a plunge, one and sometimes two of the backfield are wasted. . . . It so happens that the strongest type of plays can all be used against the opposing tackle position."

"Few people realize that it takes more than a few so called stars to make a good football team. On the other hand many great football teams have made stars of mediocre individuals."

Chronicle and Comment

Continued from Page Four.

wielded in France, and after the *coup d'etat* hostile opinion within the French borders became an affair of nods and whispers. But England and Belgium were close at hand to offer an asylum to the discontented and, to quote Mr. Guedalla: "In the freer atmosphere of Brussels and Soho they took a higher tone, and a long litany of disgust went up from the 'proscrits barbus, crochus, moussus, poilus, et obtus' who haunted the Channel Islands." Of course the reference to the Channel Islands means Victor Hugo and his circle, and here is a characteristic and caustic picture of the great poet, novelist and egotist on his way to exile:

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"THE center of the stage was held by a familiar figure which had flitted about Paris in the gray light of the *coup d'etat*, hurried across Belgium and stepped off the steamer at St. Helier with the dignity of an operatic baritone confronting a stage thunderstorm. He brought with him to British territory a burning indignation, a pale, impending forehead, an astonishing vocabulary and a middle aged seraglio of two; and he installed all of them with an unseasonable air of holiday in the mild discomfort of summer lodgings. It was the astonishing achievement of Victor Hugo to contemplate the eternal verities and to commune with the infinite from an address in Marine Terrace; and on this exiguous pedestal he posed that figure which was his masterpiece, his unsurpassable, his own, in the dark crapperies of exile and lit by the wild light of stormy seas."